



## Give Our Children a Better Chance to Learn

*"Washington needs to be as committed to effective learning before school starts as we are to kindergarten through high school and to higher education."*

Governor Chris Gregoire  
December 12, 2005

### Governor Gregoire's Plan for Improved Early Learning Includes:

- ✓ Cabinet-level visibility for early learning
- ✓ A quality rating system for early learning providers

**P**arents often recall with pride and amazement how fast their babies developed an understanding of the world around them. But it wasn't all that amazing – because babies are born to learn.

The conclusive research is in, and it shows children are ready to learn well before the traditional milestones of preschool or kindergarten. In the earliest months of life, babies are actively seeking new ways to communicate, and there are steps parents and early learning providers can take to improve this very important phase of learning.

### Parents are the first and best teachers

Governor Chris Gregoire agrees there is no question that parents are the first and best teachers of their children, but she also recognizes that our very young children would benefit even more if parents and their communities had more resources to support families and help children learn. It only makes sense, for example, that child care can and should be a venue where very young children are encouraged to learn. Many child care providers are already doing this. It makes sense to maximize learning opportunities when children are ready and able to move ahead intellectually, socially and emotionally.

The pre-kindergarten period of a child's life is a rich and often untapped opportunity for that child to secure a brighter future. And we know that too many children aren't getting the help that early learning can bring. More than half of children starting school are not ready for kindergarten. Moreover, of every 100 students in Washington who enter kindergarten, only 71 graduate from high school, just 42 enter a community college or university, and only 18 receive a diploma within six years of entering college.

### Increasing the power of early learning

Governor Gregoire believes we can do better and is moving quickly to create the tools that offer early learning opportunities for all children, regardless of family background or income. Her plan to improve early learning in Washington will give kids a better chance to learn and succeed. It will lead to happier lives and help children thrive as they grow up, become adults and take their place in society and the world economy.

## A strong commitment to early learning

Governor Gregoire wants Washington to be as committed to effective early learning programs and policies as it is to making public schools and the higher education system the best they can be. The commitment must be visible to citizens and it must include consolidation of fragmented, existing programs that can be improved and made more efficient. The Governor will request that the 2006 Legislature:

**Create a Cabinet-level visibility for Early Learning,** consolidating more than a half-dozen child care and early learning programs currently scattered among various state agencies in order to increase the state's commitment to a broadened and more serious system of early learning in the years before kindergarten. The department also improves parent and family support and early learning choices, leading to better learning outcomes. It contributes to the creation of a more seamless education system, from very early childhood through college. Her 2006 supplemental budget proposal includes \$1.5 million to create the new agency.

## Finding the best early learning providers

Parents can go online to choose a new car or a college for their teenager, but when it comes to selecting child care or preschool facilities, they have very little information to go on, other than word of mouth. State government does provide child care resource and referral services, but needs to do more. Parents need detailed information about the type and quality of learning programs offered. Choice makes a difference and Governor Gregoire wants Washington parents to have solid information about what their children will receive in early learning settings. The Governor's plan:

**Creates a system to rate quality of early learning opportunities.**

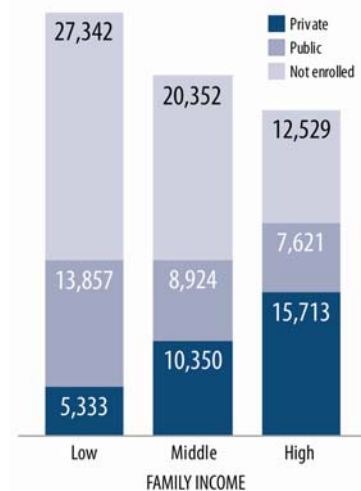
The new Department of Early Learning will develop a rating system for providers, based on how well they provide high quality early learning programs and experiences for kids. Eventually, providers whose clients receive subsidized child care through the state will receive higher reimbursement rates when they earn high ratings for the quality of early learning experiences they deliver.

## Time to act

Kids are ready to learn from day one, and the Governor believes there's no time to waste in making each of their learning experiences valuable ones. Children better prepared for the public school system will be better prepared to live happier, more successful lives. They are less likely to have trouble in school and more likely to avoid social and legal problems. When it comes to early learning, the sooner we act, the better.

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Participation in Preschool  
for 3, 4 & 5-year-olds



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, analysis by OFM

### MAJOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

CHILDREN  
SERVED

Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP)	6,000
Head Start & Early Head Start	11,056
Migrant & Indian Head Start	3,917
Infant & Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP)	6,806
Special Ed Preschool (IDEA, Part B)	13,000
Working Connections Childcare	33,474

Source: Washington Learns